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411 The Yamana has invented several missiles to overtake the various animals hunted, and each in its way is surprisingly efficient. He takes them along in his canoe whever he goes and places them, ready for use, in the bow section where they stick out far above the bow. The first thing he does when game approaches is to choose the weapon suitable for it; afterwards he seizes whatever is nearest at hand, so as not to lose the booty. Aspinall:270 maintains "[the man in the canoe] three kinds of such spears with him." There are at least that many, and two or three of each kind. It is clear that the two-barbed javelin and the bird-spear with the serrated bone point have a variety of uses.

411 Every adult is capable of making and repairing these weapons; they are indispensable to him for his 443 livelihood. Not everyone, however, succeeds in 437 cutting out an even shaft from the main trunk of the 554 beech; individual men attain true mastery at this. That is why many a man will trade a good shaft for other things that he needs. Everyone always has a supply of loose points which he keeps in a longish leather pouch, yā́núku. Those few men who are able to make a perfectly shaped large harpoon point are 411 universally praised (186). In conclusion it should be

186. Descriptions of these missiles are to be found in Bove (c):132, Cojazzi:109, Dabbene (b):184, Hyades (h):23 and (q):302, 353, Lothrop (b):148, Martial:191, Spegazzini (a):163, Spencer:133, Weddell (a):94, and others.

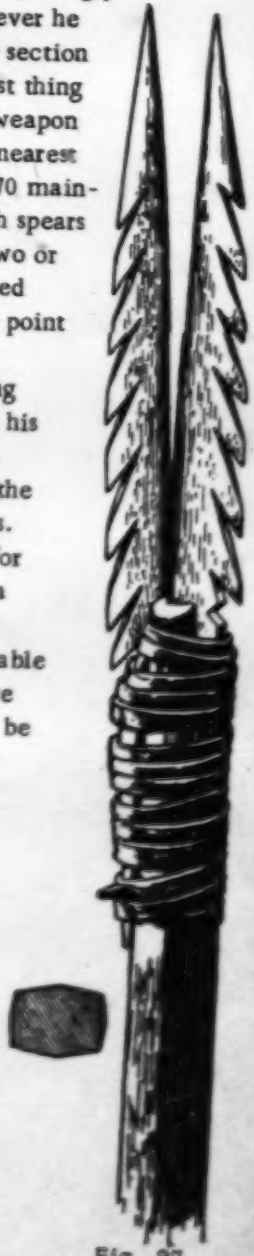

Fig. 37.
Fish Spear.

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12. Technical Skills

511 The material possessions of these southernmost Fuegians seem at first glance unusually frugal and poor. If we look more carefully, however, we are surprised at the considerable variety of implements and tools. Hence, our natives are not altogether destitute. In the variety of their utensils they without doubt considerably surpass the neighboring Selk'nam. The canoe alone is such an inestimably valuable means of transportation that it cannot be compared with travel on foot.

182 The environment into which our Yamana were placed was a
176 good teacher. With their own resourcefulness and keen gift of observation, with the knowledge gained by experience through short, successive generations, they finally created weapons and tools of such high efficiency that it could hardly be noticeably increased within the possibilities of development originally afforded them. Anyone who will make an effort to gain an insight into the mechanics of each of the implements used by the Fuegians and the physical forces operating it will pay high tribute to their creative power.

Even Bridges (k):240 who was in a position to observe them for decades in closest proximity bowed to their ability, and offerred the following brilliant testimony, probably with not a little inner resistance: "The natives have evolved all the qualities most /509/ useful for the life they live; their canoes are perfect specimens of their kind and the same can be said of all their utensils and implements. With the material at their disposal I do not know how these could be improved. They are perfectly adapted to the soil and climate of the country in which they live" /translated from Spanish/. Behind the unprepossessing form and the pitiful simplicity of Fuegian implements is hidden an unsurpassed suitability.

463 In general each person makes what he needs in material possessions with his own hands and for himself alone. Exceptions are those things which, in the normal household life, are needed by the family or by the husband and wife equally, and which, accordingly, he provides for her and she for him. Manufacture is, therefore, an individual matter. There is no special class of

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463 craftsmen who professionally produce a certain article for the rest of the population. No one need fear professional jealousy or unfair competition, because everyone works for his own needs. Obviously, the natural endowment and personal effort of individuals are very different, whereas the material used is generally always the same. Anyone who has a sense of beautiful form and who takes pleasure in a neatly made article sometimes attains great mastery in his work.

535 The Yamana have special expressions to characterize this ability in the various fields of daily activity. We have just mentioned the word yetánakípa for a capable basket-weaver; wěstágutěs (according to BD:615 "clever, expert, neat in work" /cited in English/) means one whose manual skill in general overshadows others; yěsmánu has the same meaning.

Thus a certain stamp of individual personality, at least of an individual method of work, without conscious intent, however, marks each object as the product of the person who made it. Of course, everyone recognizes his own product, and this is made even easier by the fact that the possessions of an individual are very limited. For a practiced eye the difference between two objects of a similar type is sometimes very great. Everyone evaluates things that are excellently made or that have turned out particularly well no less accurately than he does inadequate and shabby articles. People who work skillfully and produce good things are appreciated far and wide (225); on the basis of their

225. Despard (b):717 wrote: "The dextrous spear, paddle, and canoe-maker, is held in honour, and called yersh-man-oa, or handyman" /cited in English/.

products, a father often spurs his son on to more exact and industrious handwork.

437 463 Personal excellence, as a result of which some person or other is able to produce a certain article, brings about the transfer of certain items to other hands by way of barter. There is no getting around the fact that one person has more dexterity and skill for one thing and another person for some other thing. /510/ /Fig. 54 appears here./ Fitz-Roy (a):186 was very definitely made aware of

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Fig. 54. Long Bone Points.

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this fact: "It is rather curious that usually each of these natives is trained to a particular pursuit: thus, one becomes an adept with the spear; another with the sling; another with a bow and arrows; but this excellence in one line does not hinder their attaining a considerable proficiency in all the others" /cited in English/. This is actually the case.

A person who lacks something that he is unable to make because of a shortage of raw material or as a result of his own incapacity acquires it through barter with someone who happens to be in a position to dispose of it. For example, only a few men are completely successful in cutting and filing the long bone harpoon points (Fig. 54), in putting an arrow together, or in removing a wide sheet of bark for canoe building. It is inevitable that the individual will sometimes become dependent on others to a certain extent when he must fill his need for certain implements. This considerably strengthens the awareness of the solidarity of all members of the tribe.

To begin with, however, scarcely anyone would think of using the object which he happens to have for purposes of barter, since in all his work and striving he is primarily and fundamentally concerned with his own needs. He uses his own measurements as a basis. That is to say, he decides on the length and

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437 463 breadth, the particular shape of the weapon or implement, in accordance with his own personal convenience, according to his bent and taste, depending on how he has practiced making it or is in the habit of doing it differently. From this arise the differences between the utensils of one man and another, between such small things as baskets, sewing work, and so forth, which one Indian woman or another will make for herself alone.

411 Because each weapon and each tool fits its maker's own hand, so to speak, it follows that each person has great dexterity in handling his own articles. /511/ Time and again their suppleness and accuracy of aim, their sure grip and controlled fist, their ability to make estimates, and their sharp eye have been justly regarded with awe and wonder by Europeans (226). It is true

226. Many agree with Bove's (g):235 judgment concerning their weapons, that the Fuegians "know how to handle them with marvelous dexterity and precision" /translated from Italian/.

that with constant practice everyone can accomplish a great deal. Many a European who has tried to use the sling or the harpoon or some other native implement has gone about it very awkwardly and become the laughing stock of the Indians.

The fact that no one owns more than one extra utensil of those most frequently needed is an indication of self-confidence. The less a person must carry around with him on his constant travels, the more comfortable it is for him and the freer he feels. It is only when want and need force him to restore the loss of an implement that he instantly and decisively sets to work. Since not even the thought of his own needs forces our Indian to make this or that object in order to have it on hand, how much less can we expect him to make anything for barter.

182 Our Fuegians procure and make their implements with little effort. They manipulate them very adroitly and steadily. They can depend absolutely on their own ability and the effectiveness of their weapons (227). What, therefore, should press and drive

227. Every careful observer will agree

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225 No one clamors for priority rights since, in view of the gigantic size of the animal, everyone can abundantly satisfy his wishes.
[887] In general, the old, influential men reach an agreement with the one who first sighted or touched the whale as to which of them should undertake the dissection. Not everyone has the experience and skill to do this, but these are demanded in order that the distribution can proceed without a hitch and as little as possible of the
[963] meat and fat is lost. A so-called wálaputēs, a man who is practiced in cutting up a whale (348), chooses four or five helpers with

348. BD:630 describes him as "clever, expert, careful in cutting up a whale" /cited in English/.

whom he attacks the giant animal.

They make a quick estimate to determine the number of people present. Then they immediately step up to the whale or on top of it, and with /577/ sharp mussel shells they cut off one piece of fat after another, the size of a small table-top. Each distributor begins at a certain spot on the carcass and first of all scrapes off the parasites from the surface, especially the common Balanus psittacus. Then he strips off the thin skin and makes incisions from above deep enough to strike the muscle tissues. Finally he separates the square flap of fat from below and lets it go to the first applicant. One small area close to another is taken off the whale carcass by the distributor. Before he gives away an individual piece, he makes a long incision in the middle of this large flap of fat, through which the recipient sticks his head. It hangs around his neck like a shoulder-cape and he goes off with it happily in the direction of his hut. It could not be as conveniently carried either on his back or in his arms; it cannot slide off and, besides, he has his hands free. Without discrimination, one after another of the persons assembled gets his piece and returns when he has consumed it.

Naturally, one or another of them can state his preferences to the distributor, for certain areas are tastier than others. Even on the trip to the spot where the whale is branded people talk about the abundance that has now been offered them and express their preference for this or that morsel. One person, for instance,